

Our Way to Peace

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Our Way to Peace

by [slamncram](#)

Summary

All King Loki has known since his father betrayed the alliance with Asgard is the disdain of the All-Father. Jotunheim has been under his heel, powerless, and Loki has done what he could to help it survive since being forced onto the throne as a boy. Now, grown, with seidr strong enough to rival Odin himself, Loki has a plan.

And that plan involves Odin's son, Thor. The God of Thunder, next in line for the throne of Asgard. If Loki has his way, Thor won't live to take it, and Odin will understand the grief the Jotnar have felt for centuries.

But, when does Loki ever - easily - get his way? And what happens when Thor himself is the wrench in the young king's plans?

Notes

Back in the middle of working on my big bang I was hit with inspiration for a Hades and Persephone inspired AU for these two, and I was finally able to get it done, guilt-free!

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

The war that took the king from Jotunheim and put a young prince on the throne long before his time was legend in the realm. King Laufey, their most decorated king, once a general in the army, and named heir by the king before him who had none, had been a force to be reckoned with. He, with the armies of Jotunheim, alongside the forces of Asgard, had brought peace to the realms, and had taken on the mantle of winter. While the Asgardian king, the All-Father, Odin, had brought forth summer to the universe, Laufey would bring forth winter. Dark and cold, like Jotunheim was fabled to be. It was a relationship that benefit both of them, and their realms, and the realms they watched over.

But, as happens sometimes, Laufey grew to desire things beyond his role. He grew weary of the treaty with Asgard, and tired of peacetime. The cycle of winter, spring, summer and autumn grated on him, and he sought to lay his claim over the realms, and take his place as the new All-Father, through means that had brought the Jotnar armies to victory time and time again.

Laufey had sought to plunge the realms into permanent winter, and for that, Odin rose up against his former ally, his once closest friend, and defeated him. For his crimes against the realms, Laufey was banished, for all time, to Hel, the land of the dead.

It was a particularly cruel punishment, in the eyes of the new, young king. Laufey had not been killed, merely defeated, but he was banished to that realm anyway. He was made to live amongst the dead, souls who had followed him and those who had died at his hand. It would be a unique torture for the one who had sought to reach beyond his place, and, in some ways, the new king admired Odin's creativity in that.

But it was the only thing Loki admired about him.

Loki Laufeyson had been barely more than a child when his father had led the rebellion against the All-Father, and when the banishment was handed down, he was the one who would take the place of Jotunheim's disgraced king. His brothers, Helbindi and Byleistr, had been killed in the battles. He was the only heir left, and Loki was sure that Odin had thought that a good thing. The eldest sons of Laufey had been battle-hardened, warlords in their own right. They would not have been so easy to control.

Loki, Laufey's youngest, and his runt, was the opposite of that. Young, impressionable, easy to control. He went easily under Odin's heel, forced to bend the knee and swear his allegiance to Asgard again, once his father had broken it.

Even with his mother, Farbauti, at his side, Loki had been powerless to resist. He was too young, too inexperienced, and even if the seidr in him was growing stronger with every passing year, it was not nearly enough to face up to the might of Odin's power.

And so, Jotunheim was punished for the acts of their power-hungry king. They were put to rule under a young king who had not been taught to take this role, because it was assumed he never would. They were turned into a mockery of the realms, their alliance with the Asgardians broken, their once prestigious reputation given over to the people of Vanaheim.

It was shameful. It was difficult.

And Loki had come up as king under those conditions. Oh, he'd had his advisors. Mostly his mother, but a few of his father's council had been spared the blade, and they advised him well. Jotunheim did not flourish, it did not prosper, but under Loki's rule, it persevered. It lasted. Loki

grew into a man, Laufey stayed in his torturous banishment, and Jotunheim stood as strong as it could, given its place, firmly under the All-Father's heel.

But, if Loki, God of Mischief and Winter, had his way, Jotunheim would not stay that way for long.

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Loki had been lucky, all things considered. He had grown up at his mother's side, and had attended his father's councils a number of times. He knew what happened to the enemies of Asgard – and, at the time, Jotunheim – and it was not so kind as to inherit a throne, unopposed. Like his regard for Odin's creativity in his banishment of Laufey, Loki held some admiration for the punishment that had been put upon the remainder of the Jotnar Royal Family as well. It could have been worse. As a runt, Loki could have been seen as worthless, had his throat cut and his body thrown before the Jotnar court as another example of what happened when Asgard was crossed. His mother could have been taken as a slave, beaten and raped until her will was broken and her former status as a queen was nothing but myth.

Odin had done none of that. It was because of that, Loki knew, that he had been able to prosper in the way he did. He had learned and become a king, he had worked on his craft, and after a particularly long spring, summer and autumn, Odin had allowed him, under supervision of the Einherjar, to bring winter to the realms, and then allowed it to be taken away by his own son, Thor, into the blossoming colours and warmth of spring. The old cycle was put back in place and, though Jotunheim was not given the regard they once were, at least they were not cut off entirely.

That should have been enough, and, often, for the people, it was. They had their lives, they, generally, had food enough. Their culture was in place and they were not being slaughtered for sport. It could have been worse.

To Loki, though, now a man, seated on the throne, it could have been better.

He had been young when Laufey had made his mistakes. Loki had never been fond of his father, and the feeling, he felt, was mutual. Loki was an embarrassment, as a runt, and he was too lithe and sneaky as a fighter. He didn't have the might of his older brothers, and it was unlikely he would ever wield Ice-Crusher, his father's warhammer.

That had been fine by Loki. He hadn't wanted to. Let Helbindi and Byleistr fight for the throne, Loki was happier with his tricks and his seidr.

Fate *had* let his brothers fight for the throne. They had died in the effort, and Laufey, the father Loki had never held much appreciation or love for, was removed from the picture.

It would have been a wonderful thing, if it hadn't taken away everything Loki had taken for granted. His spare time, his freedom, his title of God of Mischief and nothing else. His childhood. Laufey being gone should have been a good thing for Loki, the Overlooked. It became his worst nightmare, subject to the Asgardian crown, and the added title of God of Winter.

He would have given anything to relinquish the crown. He did well enough, he knew that, but he was a trickster at heart. He wasn't made for the throne. Not like this.

Crossing Asgard, however, was impossible. The armies had been disbanded, only a small

contingent of royal guards left, and Odin sent his Einherjar to the realm regularly to make sure there was nothing going on that his All-Seeing Guardian, Heimdall, did not see. They could not rise up, could not train, could not reform the might they had once had. Odin would not allow for it.

For years, Loki had thought over that, turning it over in his head, working his scheme.

And finally, he had his answer.

Odin was far from weak, far from his time to step down off the throne of Asgard, but he was beginning to take steps that meant he *would* step down. Word had reached Loki's ears that the Asgardian king was planning on turning over his realm to his son, Thor, within the next cycle of seasons. Eventually, he would follow that with control over all nine realms, and make Thor the new All-Father.

Thor, God of Thunder, God of Spring. A fertility god with control over a vastly destructive force. He was, Loki knew, something of a legend, though he was not much older than Loki himself. An acclaimed warrior, a brilliant tactician, a beloved general. He would make a fine replacement for Odin on the throne. From what Loki knew, he would be just as firm when needed, and just as benevolent when not.

But transfers of power were the time when a kingdom was most vulnerable. Odin, when he had ordered Loki to his knees, had taught him that.

And now, Loki, no longer on his knees, would return the favour, and impart the lesson back on the teacher.

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Asgard. The realm eternal, the golden realm. The home of the Aesir gods, the most powerful in all the nine realms.

Loki remembered visiting it, as a child. It had been gleaming in the sun, under the heat of summer. A glorious place, and the royal city had been beautiful. Where Jotunheim's palace was built of ice and stone, spires rising like knives of warning, a true fortress of winter, Asgard's was tall, uniform, golden. Warm and ornate, the stone soft and yet strong as it held up the reaching ceilings.

Now, under the cover of night, it was no less beautiful. That didn't surprise Loki; Asgard hadn't been sentenced to centuries under the control of an enemy, once-ally. It was Autumn, a time ruled by Odin's queen, Frigga, the goddess of Love and Marriage. That was rich; she was the goddess of something that had tied her to a tyrant. The goddess of something her husband seemed incapable of, in Loki's eyes. But he could not deny that Autumn was beautiful. Warm and golden like the realm in which its goddess lived, with just a hint of a bite in the air. A gentle warning of what was to come when Loki exercised his powers over the realms.

There would be no gentle warning tonight. Odin had made sure with his Einherjar that there was nothing that Heimdall couldn't see, but Loki knew that, this night, Heimdall could not see him. Over the years, Loki's seidr had grown, and he was now a master of this.

He was cloaked so much that he couldn't be seen, could not be detected, as he moved through the streets of Asgard, around the corners of the palace corridors. If someone were to stare hard at him, there was no doubt, they would see *something*. A faint ripple, a bend in the way the tapestry behind

him hung, but he was moving too fast for that. No one gave him a second glance.

Not even the guards that he slipped past, when he came to the wing of the Asgardian palace that housed the royal apartments.

It was all almost too simple, and, for a moment, while he crept to the rooms Loki suspected were Thor's, he had a terrible thought. That Odin knew, and Loki would open this door to find Thor and his own hammer, Mjolnir, awaiting him. That he would have his skull bashed in like Helbindi.

Shaking that off, Loki slowed, looking around, taking this in. As he did, he let his footprints stay. He wanted Odin to know who had done this, who had slipped into their palace and outsmarted the All-Father. Loki's footprints, frost-framed, would tell him that truth.

For centuries, Jotunheim had lived under the rule of Asgard. No longer an ally, no longer trusted, despite bending the knee and being little more than a slave made up of thousands. Loki had been put on a throne he'd never wanted, and turned into a puppet he'd never had the good sense to fear. He had known grief, for that.

Odin would know grief, now, for what he had done.

The door to Thor's chambers wasn't locked. Why would it be? He was a prince, the king-to-be, in the most powerful of all the nine realms. He had a unit of guards blocking entry to his apartments. There was an All-Seeing guard watching over the realm. Thor, himself, was a great warrior. He had no need for locks.

Loki stepped inside quickly, and shut the door behind him without a sound, finally dropping his glamour as he pushed the furred hood of his cloak back, and looked around the parlour. This would be where the prince entertained his guests. Loki wondered if he had done that tonight. If he had sent young Asgardian socialites on their way before retiring to his bed, with promises to see each other again, not knowing what was coming his way.

The warm glass of the room's windows clouded and frosted as Loki passed them by, heading into the next room. It was circular, a large stone bath in the middle of it, still shining in the moonlight as though it had not been emptied long ago. Loki knelt, touching his fingers to it, and watching lines of ice draw themselves around the basin, following the trails of once steaming water.

It was the room beyond the bath that Loki was drawn to, and he didn't linger long, straightening up and pushing back his cloak. His footsteps, still leaving designs of frost on the stone, were light, quiet as the night around them, as he pushed open the chamber door, and looked upon his target, one hand conjuring a blade to life in his palm.

Thor very well could not have been alone. Loki had been prepared for that possibility. His own mother had often lamented that Loki did not bring more company home to bed with him. Jotunheim would need an heir, she said, and Loki knew Asgard was no different.

And he was sure that Thor did not often sleep alone. It was a sign from the Norns that, as Loki stepped into that room, he could make out only one shape under the blankets. Only one form.

He would not have hesitated to make more than one kill, tonight, but this did make things simpler.

Edging closer to the bed, Loki held his dagger tight. There was a nervousness in his belly, a wariness to his steps. This could all go wrong, should Thor wake up, and while the windows in his chamber frosted, Loki prayed that would not happen.

Jotunheim had already lost one king to the creativity of the House of Odin. They need not lose two.

Thor was laid on his stomach, his face turned to the side against the pillows, and while Loki didn't much relish the thought of stabbing the son of his enemy in the back, he would. Still, carefully, he moved around the bed, mindful of where he was stepping, until he was standing by the head of it, and looking down at his target.

Thor was beautiful.

There was no other way to describe him. Oh, yes, Loki had met him once, but that had been centuries ago, when they were boys, and Laufey was still allied with Odin. He had been a gangly, blonde boy then, flowers blooming like mad as he ran circles around them, their parents greeting each other. Loki remembered neither Odin nor Frigga making a move to control their youngest son. Their daughter, Hela, who now ruled over Hel, and tortured Loki's father, had been stood at their side, controlled, quiet and regal in her own way, but Thor had been boisterous, alive, glorious like the season he would come to control.

Loki remembered that meeting because he had been so envious. His brothers had been stood at his father's right, his mother to his left, and Loki had been stood in front of his parents. Just between them, where Laufey could grip his shoulder tight to bruising when Loki swayed like he might join the Odinson in his play.

Thor had always had the things Loki didn't, in Loki's mind. Killing him would be a pleasure, he would feel no guilt over it, would only rejoice while his hot blood soaked the blankets and the mattress, would only smile as he choked on the blood he would sputter onto the plumped pillows.

That had been what Loki had expected.

Now, looking at Thor, that seemed so much more difficult. Thor's blonde hair had grown long, like Loki's, but unlike Loki's plait, Thor's was loose, with only a few small, tight ones woven through. His once bare cheeks were covered in a well trimmed beard, and dark eyelashes laid against his cheek, his closed lids covering eyes that Loki knew would still be brilliant and blue, like the lightning he conjured.

He was no longer the boy. His bare arms and back were thick with muscle, the moonlight catching on the curves of it. Loki was lithe, yes, but he had muscle. He was a warrior in his own right. He was simply nothing like this. Nothing like Thor.

The thunder god was a thing of beauty, and Loki couldn't do it. He couldn't come here and kill him.

His decision was made in a split second, the dagger vanished quickly as he called forth his seidr for a different kind of magic.

Loki wouldn't kill Thor.

He would take him for his own.

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"Did you go that far for nothing?"

There was a roar in the tower, rage shown by the lightning crashing outside the palace windows,

but Loki paid it no mind. His mother was following him, gotten out of bed, like Loki suspected most of Jotunheim was now, by the sound of Loki's change of plans.

"Not for nothing." Loki pointed out, turning into the royal apartments that belonged to him. Unlike Thor's parlour, that had been designed for entertaining, Loki's was lined with books, and a large table took up the center of it, a map of the realms etched into its surface. "Odin will still grieve, and he will still bend to my demands."

"Your demands?" Farbauti asked. "Boy, *what* demands? You have taken his son, his *heir*, the God of Thunder, and locked him up in one of our towers, to what end? When Odin realizes what you've done, the might of Asgard *will* come down upon us. He spared us once, when your father tried to cross him. He will not suffer you to live, this time. Nor *any* of us." As she'd been speaking, her voice had raised in pitch, reaching an almost frenzied octave by the time she raised her hand, her wool shawl, with its ornate silver designs, rising with it.

Loki reached up and caught her wrist before she could slap him.

"Mother, *mother*." Never had Farbauti shown him the kind of discipline that Laufey had been so fond of, but he could not fault her it. What he had done was beyond reason, and, as he had been leaving Asgard with Thor bound and hidden by his seidr, he had damned his own weakness. He had come to kill Thor, and was instead so struck by his beauty that he was abducting him.

Farbauti had not known of Loki's original plan. She had only known he was going to Asgard to learn.

He had come back with a thunder god as a prize. Of course she was a little upset.

"Do *not* try and placate me, Loki. You know what's to come, you've *doomed* us!"

"Mother, please. Try not to be so dramatic. Do you think me so stupid?" Loki waited a moment, making sure Farbauti wasn't about to take a swing at him again before he let go of her wrist. "I know that Odin will be angry. I know that he may try to exact his revenge on Jotunheim for what I've done. I knew that he would do that when I went there with the intention to kill Thor."

Farbauti paused, her skeptical look replaced with something akin to shock. "*Kill* Thor? Kill the next All-Father? Loki... Loki, this is *madness*. You have to claim madness. I can do it for you. We can return Thor to Asgard with both of us in tow, and claim that the stress of the throne and of your father's duties have driven you mad. I will offer to take the throne in your stead, and --"

"--No."

Farbauti stopped. "No? Boy, have you *truly* gone mad? Is this more than a ruse we will be bringing to the All-Father?"

Loki understood how she could see it as madness. He nearly saw it as that himself. Odin was strong, powerful in a way that Loki simply wasn't.

When he had been forced onto the throne, that was.

In that time, his seidr had grown. Honed and perfected until Loki knew he would be a worthy opponent for Asgard.

"I did not go to Asgard to kill Thor with no plan for how to protect our people. You know that my magic has grown, mother." As though in response to that, in a show of the power *Thor* possessed, lightning flashed outside the window, followed by a deafening crash of thunder. "I can protect us,

now. I have learned barrier magics that will keep Asgard from reaching us. The Bifrost is closed to us by the spell I have cast, but Jotunheim is closed to them. They cannot come here. We would have been free. Free to live and govern and grow without the threat of Asgard.”

Farbauti was listening, now, clearly calming under the explanation of her son’s intentions. Still, she questioned, “could you not have done that without killing Thor?”

“I could have.” Loki agreed. “But this is the Jotnar way, isn’t it? Bloody. A life for a life. He banished my father to Hel, as a living soul, for the rebellion he planned. I would have taken away his heir, and shown him the grief that *we* felt.” *Not I. Not for Laufey, in any case.* “It would have been fitting, and we would have been free.”

“Well... I cannot disagree with that. *It is* our way.” His mother agreed. Moving over to the window, she looked out, watching the arcs of lightning dancing across the clouded sky. She waited until the rumble of thunder had followed it, before she spoke again. “But you did not kill him. You took him. What end does that achieve?”

Loki had thought over that, on his trip back between the realms. He had not dared use the Bifrost, too concerned that his seidr would not truly hide himself and Asgard’s prince in such close proximity to Heimdall. The path between realms had given him more than enough time to think.

Loki hated the throne. He hated the way it trapped him, the way it took away his freedom. He would have given much to be rid of it, and now, he had a way.

“I’ve made my demands. I’m unsure if Odin has found that his son is missing, yet. I haven’t felt a press upon our borders, but I have made them. In exchange for his son being returned, I will extract promises from the All-Father. One will be to leave Jotunheim to its own devices. I can ensure that the throne will never move to impose permanent winter on the realms ever again, and that we will be a model ally, given that Odin no longer interferes, and no longer crushes us beneath his heel.” Loki sat down at the head of his table, fingers tracing the lines of his home realm. “In exchange for Thor, I will ask that the All-Father lift father’s banishment. That he return him to us, and then I will give father back his throne, so long as he agrees to my conditions.”

Farbauti nodded, moving over towards the table herself. Her long, elegant fingers curled over the back of one of the chairs, and she leaned forward, regarding her son, her youngest, the regent she had brought up at her side.

“I’m sorry I doubted you.” She said. “But, should the All-Father reject your demands, you know what course you must take. You cannot simply fold and give him back his heir.”

Thunder rolled outside the palace again, and Loki was certain it was quieter. There was an air of defeat in it.

“If Odin refuses my demands,” Loki started, “I will kill Thor.”

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It was hours before the storms ended. By that time, Loki had spoken with every councillor he had, and had made an announcement to the people at large that the prince of Asgard meant them no harm and no harm would come to them from Asgard. It had taken some convincing. A lot of convincing, actually, but, in the end, and Loki suspected, thanks to the end of the storms, the

people and his councillors seemed to trust his move. To trust his words. Jotunheim was safe, Asgard could not reach them, and Thor was not a danger.

As he climbed the stairs to the apartments where he'd put Thor, Loki simply hoped that was true.

His seidr was strong. He knew that, and yet, the duration and power of the thunderstorms Thor had called forth when he awoke and found himself captive shook him. If that was what Thor was capable of, was Loki able to face him?

The fact that Thor had not broken *out* of the apartments Loki had left him in seemed to suggest that he was, but taking these things with caution was something Loki had learned well. It never paid to rush in without thinking when Asgardians were concerned.

The rooms beyond the heavy door Loki had sealed with magic were quiet while he stood outside them. That seemed fine, but Loki wasn't taking any chances. It was probably a good thing, because when he cast a spell to lift and bind Thor, there was a crash on the other side of the door, and a roar of annoyance that was far too close to be comfortable.

Assured that Thor was in hand, Loki unsealed the door and pulled it open, glancing around at the room.

It wasn't an entire disaster. These rooms would never be as opulent as the ones Thor had known back in Asgard, but Loki liked them nonetheless. He had gone beyond what his mother thought wise and given Thor the best apartments they had to offer for visiting dignitaries. That would be what Thor was, should his father agree to the terms, and Loki was going to do everything in his power to make sure the prince's stay was anything but entirely horrible.

So far, Thor had done plenty to make the room something less welcoming than it had been. Tables and chairs were overturned, and there was a large scorch mark in the centre of the rug. By the door, a large, heavy bronze vase had fallen on its side, dropped when Loki had hoisted Thor into the air. And speaking of Thor...

"This isn't a very kind way to repay your host for what is, in my opinion, more generosity than you should be afforded by any Jotunn." Loki looked away from the vase, up into Thor's stormy face. He was glaring at Loki, his arms trapped behind his back, his legs bound together, only a few inches from the floor. Loki had left him clothing, things he'd taken from the prince's chambers before he'd stolen him on Asgard, and Thor had, at least, decided to dress himself. Not the armour Loki was sure he would rather have, of course. Thor was stuck with a long sleeved woolen shirt, a tunic, trousers, and boots. The clothing was cut from fine cloth, and he looked respectable, but he was no warrior prince. Not in that attire.

"I was abducted in the night by a runt of a Jotunn king." Thor shot back. "The repayment of his *generosity* will come by my hammer, not by the destruction of some old furniture."

Loki hummed, flicking his wrist, his magic righting the chairs and tables, setting the vase back in its place. "Interesting threat. You don't *have* your hammer." He looked up into Thor's eyes, smiling coolly. Those eyes *were* just as bright and blue as Loki had suspected they would be. "I thought you were supposed to be able to call it to you, no matter what? And yet, here you are, crouching inside your rooms with an old vase as a weapon, hoping to catch that *runt king* by surprise, the way you were. Is that what's happening here?"

Thor pressed his lips together, and Loki grinned, shark-like. His magic was working.

"You cannot *call* your hammer to you, Odinson, because Asgard is closed to you. And Jotunheim

is closed to it. By me. The runt.”

The understanding was clear on Thor’s face, and Loki drank it in. For too long, he had felt like he and his people were under the heel of Asgard, looked down on, belittled, and second to them. Now, they had the upper hand, thanks to him, and, for once, a member of the Asgardian royal family was feeling that, too.

Loki couldn’t drink it in for long, though. This may have been really and truly satisfying if his prisoner were Odin, but it was his son. The boy who, had Laufey not gone mad with power, Loki may have befriended. They may have grown up side by side as allies and friends, but now Thor was trapped in Loki’s magic while Loki held him hostage, and they did not truly know each other.

“What’s your price?”

Loki let go of his small guilts, shrugging as though the question was something he hadn’t thought much about. “I’m sure if you think about it, you will understand.”

“Do you? Because I don’t. I’m not much of a prize, King Loki. I am no maiden, and I will fight you. I will not be your prisoner. You seek to exchange me for... what? Your own father?” Thor’s face lit up in a smirk as he caught the expression Loki was too slow to hide. “Your father. Interesting. Here you are, on the throne, able to rule your realm, and yet you would have my father release yours? Do you realize that could lose you your throne? Or perhaps you are too enslaved to your tyrant father to know better and to take things for yourself when they are given to you.”

Loki narrowed his eyes, stepping closer to Thor, lowering the other so the toes of his boots dragged against the carpet.

“I want my father back to take any pleasure *your* father takes from his banishment away. But it isn’t simply my father I ask for. I ask for my realm. For Jotunheim to be free from the boot of Asgard pressing on our neck, day and night, year after year, season upon season.” He stepped closer, barely a few inches between himself and Thor. “You call my father a tyrant, but your own is far from any different. And you are his heir. To have you back, he will have to concede to my demands. Your sister rules Hel, but if my father remains there?” Loki shrugged. “Then you will rule nothing but these apartments, and Jotunheim will remain closed and free.”

He turned, finally dropping Thor with his magic. The presentation of his back, he knew, would be too difficult a target to ignore for the Asgardian prince, and within seconds he heard the rushing footfalls of a charge. With a snap of his fingers, he stopped Thor, glancing back over his shoulder and starting.

He’d stopped Thor, yes, but the other was straining against his magic, his arms outstretched and nearly touching the fur of Loki’s cape.

“This? Will not do.” Loki said, gathering himself and trying not to show his shock. It was too late. Thor had caught on to it, and was settling, looking Loki over. Sizing him up, trying to get his measure. Master tactician. “I am prepared to give you some freedoms. This apartment. I will have furs brought to you to keep you warm. In time, I may let you roam the royal city, but, for now, you are confined to the palace. No weapon will allow itself to be touched by you, I have already cast that spell. No one will side with you, Asgard is our greatest enemy. The Einherjar, your guardian, and your father are all unable to reach you here, but you may find company in the court, myself and perhaps my mother, if she is not too disgusted by the sight of you. You may eat the food and drink the water.”

Thor frowned. “This is a touch *too* kind to be coming from the Jotnar king.”

Loki knew that. He knew it well, and he had argued with his mother and his councillors about what he intended. He'd framed it as needing to make sure Thor was not felt to be entirely *mistreated* while he was here. No matter what bargains Odin may make, Thor would need to be controlled when he, too, took the throne of Asgard. If Jotunheim had mistreated him, it could be certain that they would get the same in return.

"You are a prisoner, Thor Odinson. But you are not to be tortured or abused. This is a political move, not a sadistic one." Loki explained. As he'd spoken, he had let down the barrier that protected Thor from reaching him. "There is one more thing, though."

Thor crossed his arms. "I'm sure. What is it, king runt? Am I to be at your beck and call? Am I to attend to some errands you wish to give your servants a break from?"

Loki laughed. "I don't have enough *servants* to offend them by giving their paying duties to you, Odinson. No. The condition is that you cannot drink the wine. I cannot have you getting drunk, and carrying on, and destroying and scaring my people. I have already promised them that the prince of Asgard will know better than to hurt women and children, particularly when I intend to let him go."

If his father agrees, Farbauti's voice warned, in the back of Loki's mind, *if not...*

"That's hardly a difficulty." Thor said. "I can live without getting drunk."

"Surely," Loki answered, in a tone that said he disagreed. "But just to make sure you don't, there is a spell on the wine, here. One I have weaved myself, and considering you could not escape these rooms, set fire to your lodging, or summon your hammer, I believe you understand my seidr to be strong." Thor nodded, and something in Loki's gut twisted in pleasure. It was so seldom that Loki faced an enemy, much less one who could call him *runt* one moment, but agree that his seidr was strong the next. "You drink the wine here, you cannot leave."

Thor's eyebrows furrowed. "Ever?"

"Ever. No matter if your father agrees to my demands or not. I think that should be a good enough incentive for you to keep away from the wine, here, and to keep a level head."

Thor didn't seem happy about it, but it was obvious that he understood. That was all Loki was asking.

"Another thing. You will dine with me every evening." Loki's stomach fluttered at this condition, and he forced it away. It had nothing to do with how beautiful Thor was. It had nothing to do with the golden hair and blue eyes and how handsome his face looked even as he frowned. "This is to keep an eye on you. To find out what you've been up to, and, often, the queen will join us. My mother may not have the gifts I do, but she is strong in other ways, and she will tell me if you are lying, or being distrustful."

"I'm a prisoner," Thor replied, with a roll of his eyes. "I'm distrustful by default."

Loki ignored what he said about being a prisoner. It wasn't untruthful, even if Loki was giving him treatment that most prisoners would never receive. "I'm sure the first few evenings will be difficult, but in time, maybe you will grow to be a touch more pleasant. Sundown, every night. The bells will ring. Listen for them, tonight."

This condition, Loki had brought on himself. He knew it was selfish, no matter how he tried to spin it. He wanted time where he could look upon Thor and speak to him. Perhaps it would have the added benefit of an alliance forming between the two of them. That was certainly what he'd

brought up when he told his council of it. They had been so glad for his attempts to foster alliance with the future All-Father that they hadn't seen through him and, for now, Loki was happy to act in accordance with what they believed.

"I won't lock this door behind me, but, remember. You are being given freedom within the palace as a gift. You cannot go beyond the outer walls of the compound, and I suggest you not try. There are fathers and sons of Jotunheim who still remember well what your father did to us, all those centuries ago."

"*Your* father brought that down upon them."

Loki shrugged, turning to go. "He may have, but when the armies of Asgard invaded, and my lady-mother and I were forced to bend the knee at the end of a blade, it was not my father's face they saw."

*

Odin received his demands. And, as expected, the first thing Odin did was refuse. He would storm Jotunheim with an army, and Loki would have done to his people a worse disservice than his father before him.

Loki suspected it was when he realized that, not only was Jotunheim closed to the Bifrost, but it was closed to *all* comers, including Heimdall's sight, that Odin changed his tune. The second message came just more than a week later, carried on the wings of the raven Loki had sent to the All-Father, a mockery of the ravens he had himself. It was the only thing that got in and out of Jotunheim, and on its second return, it carried much better news.

"Your father is making considerations." Loki said, calmly, over dinner. Though he was sure the dinners he'd brought Thor to, thus far, had been much less extravagant than what the prince was used to, Thor didn't seem to mind. He was nothing short of ravenous, which Loki would be leery of if he thought there was any true danger. "He's not giving into my demands, he says, but he's making considerations. You may be going home sooner than expected."

Thor laughed, dropping the bone of the hunk of meat he'd just finished back to his plate. "Is that what he says? You must be more of a fool than I thought, to believe that."

Loki smiled. "I'm no fool, Odinson. You know this. You know what my thoughts on your father's words are."

In the time Thor had been here, he had not yet missed a dinner. He had roamed the castle for the first few days. Loki could almost time him, realizing that he was mapping the palace, getting a feeling for it, day in and day out. It wasn't really a threat, but Farbauti hadn't liked it. Hadn't liked that Thor passed by her room, every three hours. Loki had quieted her concerns, and then left his council in hunt of his prisoner-guest.

He'd found Thor in the ice gardens, staring at what served as vegetation for the Jotnar. Hardy plants, the type that could withstand the ice and cold, shot up, blooming through the white, green in colour, only given colour in reds from holly or blue from the only flowers that seemed able to bloom in the cold, but seemed still to hold to the ice that surrounded them when it came to their colour.

“If you’d like, I could provide you with a map of the palace.” Loki offered, after he’d been standing at Thor’s side for some time.

“Is this all that blooms here?”

Loki had followed Thor’s gaze and shrugged. “We don’t care much for flowers in Jotunheim.”

Since then, Thor had seemed less resistant to Loki’s company and attention. He hadn’t stormed into the hall when the bells rang for dinner, and he hadn’t avoided him like the plague. In fact, he had taken to raising a hand in greeting when he saw Loki, and, though more rare, sometimes even inviting him to walk with him.

It had been nine days. Tonight would be the tenth night. Odin was giving, but slowly.

And Loki was growing more and more attached to having Thor around.

“You think my father’s words aren’t worth the paper they are carried on.” Thor answered, finally, reaching for his goblet. Water. He hadn’t done more than look at wine since Loki had warned him off it. He was being almost too obedient, and it was suspicious. In that, Loki held the same belief as his mother. The Odinson could not be wholly trusted.

“True. And so soon after you were brought to Jotunheim? Perhaps it’s my bias that colours it, but I don’t see your father being capable of growing so concerned and so forlorn so quickly.”

Thor set his goblet down. “No, but my mother? Perhaps.”

Queen Frigga. Loki hadn’t much factored her into the equation, if only because of the way he’d seen his own parents interact. Loki heeded his mother’s input much, much more than his father ever had. Loki had memories of Farbauti attempting to dissuade Laufey from his goals, long before he moved against Asgard. He’d assumed that Odin would be the same with his wife. Her words would be heard, but not heeded, and perhaps even mocked.

“Would her word have any bearing?”

Thor shrugged himself, picking another rib of meat from the platter between them. “It depends. I think it would. My father takes her council rather seriously, because they have been by each other’s side for so long and she tends to have a sixth sense about these things. Negotiations. In fact, it could be her that the words are coming from.”

Loki frowned. He hadn’t thought of that. Frigga, well, she was party to Odin’s actions, but Loki did not have any horrible memories attached to her. She, in fact, had been present during his first summoning of winter, and had encouraged him to just follow through on it, and not pay attention to the Einherjar guards around him. Later, Farbauti had spat when she said her name, called her a witch. It smacked of jealousy, now, from a woman who loved her child but always tried to raise him as firmly as possible, because that was what their place in the universe demanded.

“So, you think your mother could be influencing your father’s *considerations*.” Loki said, quietly, jabbing a knife into his meat and using another to slice a chunk from it. “Interesting. Any idea how much longer it will take for him to cave, then?”

It was said in a joking, light tone, but Thor seemed to understand that Loki felt anything but joking and light. “No idea. This is uncharted territory for me.” He smiled. “But your food is starting to grow on me, so I’m not complaining about a few more nights.”

*

It was more than a few more nights.

Weeks passed, and the raven flew back and forth, carrying messages that seemed to go in circles. Odin was considering, Odin had new terms, Odin would not agree to Loki refusing his terms. On and on it went, and Loki was growing exhausted with it. He had come to dread the moments when the bird would alight on his sill, croaking its arrival and extending its leg for the message to be taken. It would be more arguments, more refusals, more holding demands, it always was.

But he was beginning to dread the day when the crow would arrive with Odin's agreement.

Thor had won over Farbauti. Loki wasn't quite sure how he'd done it, only thinking it must have been his wit and charm. In any case, Farbauti was fond of their guest now.

Their *guest*.

She wasn't the only one who thought of him that way.

The council had come to admit that the Odinson was far from the threat they had originally imagined. Thor had sat and listened to their stories, heard their grievances. He had not been the petulant boy that had fought against Loki's magic in the tower apartments. And it was because of that, they had told Loki if he wished, he could let the Odinson out of the castle grounds.

It had been a terrifying proposal, but Loki had been unable to refuse it. Thor was growing bored, and Loki knew it. He walked circles of the palace, the grounds. He strolled up to the gates, closed to keep him inside and any would-be assassins out, and chatted with anyone who came close enough. Once, Loki had caught him seated on the ground, regaling some Jotunn children with tales of fighting a dragon on Muspelheim.

He wasn't feared. Not by the children. So, Loki had allowed it. He'd lifted his magic, a little, and he had walked with Thor and a guard out into the streets of the city. He'd thought it would be a nightmare; it wasn't.

If anything, they had made a day of it. Loki had played guide, showing Thor around the city, and introducing him to people, and Thor had enjoyed himself. He'd won over even the most dour looking shopkeepers with his smile and warm presence. This was the son of their greatest enemy, but the people were finding he was difficult to dislike.

That was the first time Loki saw the flowers.

They had been leaving a tavern where they'd eaten, and Loki had asked how Thor was enjoying his day. It had been a hesitant question, but Thor's smile had been brilliant, and real, and Loki had been sure his heart skipped a beat. Thor had told him how wonderful it was, how eye-opening and *good* for him. That perhaps Loki's plot had been a blessing in disguise, because Thor was getting to meet and interact with people of a realm who he may have always been distant from otherwise.

They had talked about that, how Thor would have followed his father's guide when he took over as king, but now that would be different. He had been to Jotunheim, met their people, heard their stories. He had a view his father couldn't possibly hold.

And as he'd spoken, flowers had bloomed beneath his feet.

Not the icy blue flowers that Loki was so used to seeing, either. These ones were bright, full, sunny yellow and bright red, warm orange, brilliant purple, and deep blue. Their leaves and stems were emerald, lively. They looked like springtime, but they were nestled in the ice-cold, hard ground of Jotunheim's constant winter, waving in the wind and from the brush of the long fur cloak Thor had wrapped around him.

He'd heard the stories, of course. Thor was the God of Thunder, and of Spring, and he was a fertility god. When he was happy - truly, deeply happy - flowers bloomed where he walked. Loki had heard tales of this before he'd ever abducted the prince, and he had heard mention of it from the guards, who had watched Thor more closely than Loki for fear of what he might do.

Loki had thought it an embellishment, something they were saying in order to downplay the danger Thor posed, but seeing the blooms himself, here, in Jotunheim, he could doubt them no longer.

"Are you happy?" He'd asked, quietly, and when Thor had turned around to look at him, he'd seen the flowers being left in his wake, and smiled.

"I am."

*

Weeks had turned into months.

Odin still did not want to agree to the terms. Thor had leave to roam the city as he pleased, and the people who came to speak to Loki weekly about their concerns were asking when Thor would be leaving, and when he would become All-Father. They enjoyed him, they called him their friend. He listened to them, their stories and their lives, and he was sympathetic. He understood, and he had shocked them by apologizing for his father's more cruel actions. They loved him.

None more than Loki.

It had started as an admiration. Of Thor's beauty, his strength. It had grown, Loki felt, into a friendship. There was no mistake, Thor was, in truth, still a prisoner of Jotunheim, and the realm remained closed, no escape to be had, no rescue party to arrive. Yet, Thor had called Loki his friend, on more than one occasion. He said it as a joke ('who could have guessed, my jailer would become my friend') and he'd said it as a bare-faced truth as they'd sat at the table after dinner, the fire dying beside them ('no matter the outcome, you, Loki Laufeyson, are now my friend').

It made the danger of what Loki may have to do, if Odin didn't agree to his terms, that much more terrible. Farbauti had not reminded him of it, but Loki could not forget.

If Odin refused, if he saw Loki's weakness and outright refused, Loki needed to kill Thor. He needed to show that the strength and resolve of Jotunheim were not so inconsequential as to be cast off.

That would anger the people, of that Loki was sure. There was a growing movement in support of Thor when he became All-Father. He had spoken with them, sat with them, drank with them - never the wine - and shared their food. He had helped them in their shops and their homes. Thor was a symbol to the Jotnar that change was coming, and Thor would be it. If Loki were to kill him, it could prove fatal. The people could turn on him, and then it would not matter that the realm was closed to Asgard. There would be no king left for Odin to move against when the barrier magic

fell.

But all that did not matter, because the biggest hurdle that Loki would have to overcome was himself.

Thor called him friend. Loki deeply wished he could call Thor by the thing he was beginning to feel the other was. Love.

Loki should have known, when he laid eyes on Thor, asleep in his rooms, that he would be the end of him. He was too beautiful, too overwhelmingly gorgeous, and Loki should not have indulged himself. He should have given up his plans then and there, turned around and left. It would be less painful than this.

It would be less painful than watching Thor turn down the wine offered to him in good faith at the Inn.

It would be less painful than hearing Thor's laugh when they sat together at dinner.

It would be less painful than walking beside Thor, talking with him, and glancing back to see the divots in the snow where Thor's feet had been were filled with blooms that paid no mind to the fact that they were in Jotunheim, and they should not exist.

It would be less painful than knowing that, one day, Thor would either need to die, or he would go back to Asgard, to his family and his throne. He would marry an Asgardian maid, and know nothing of the fact that the Jotnar king watched him and felt the pain of love.

But Loki had made his choice. Now, he needed to live with it.

Or, at least, that was what he told himself. It was the mantra he repeated for weeks, when he stopped himself from following Thor to his apartments, or kept himself from touching Thor's hand. Thor was nothing but a piece in a political game, and no matter his words of friendship, or trust, or Loki's misplaced feelings of love, they would never be more to each other than a political alliance. Eventually, Thor would be gone, and Loki would have to deal with that fact. It was best he dealt with it now.

The way he chose to deal with it, he knew, was not the best.

But as he sat next to Thor at dinner, he wasn't thinking about what was best. He was only thinking about the pain in his heart, and the way best to stop it.

*

When Odin's agreement finally came, Loki wasn't surprised to find that Queen Frigga's hand was the one found on the paper. Odin missed his son, of that there was no doubt, but the queen was heartbroken, scared, and simply wanted an end to all this. She had written on her husband's behalf, and the reply bore both of their signatures, as well as the All-Father's seal.

Asgard would release Laufey, and allow Jotunheim its freedoms once more, though they were bargaining to maintain a supervisory role, so that, should Jotunheim's former monarch return to his traitorous ways, they would have more of a warning than they'd had the last time. This, the queen stressed, was to keep order among the realms, and to make sure that all its citizens were protected

from the whims of a few.

Loki knew he could argue with that. He could argue that, with Asgard as the ruling realm, all the nine realms were at the mercy of *their* whims, but this had gone on long enough. Thor had been on Jotunheim for months, and the queen had been more than diplomatic in her agreement to Loki's terms.

Laufey would be freed, Jotunheim would be left, for the most part, to its own devices, and Thor would be returned to Asgard. There would be no retribution on the part of the All-Father or the legions of Asgard. They had reached an agreement, and all would be satisfied.

For the most part, Loki knew he *should* be satisfied. He had achieved his end, and, when he'd announced the success of his actions to the people, there had been cheers, celebration, chanting in the streets. Once more, Jotunheim would be her own kingdom.

It was not lost on the people what they needed to give up, in order to have that freedom, however. Nor was it lost on Loki.

"So. I'm finally going home." Thor had said, reading over the paper that had held Asgard's final response, before Loki had informed the people. Loki had wanted Thor to seem elated. Relieved. To finally show his true colours, tell Loki he was glad to be rid of Jotunheim, its people and its pathetic king.

But Thor had done none of that.

What he'd done was hold out his hand to Loki in congratulations. What he'd said had been that he was thankful his father had seen reason. That the people of Jotunheim would be more free than they'd been in hundreds of years, and promised that he would work with his father to make sure the 'supervisory' role that Asgard played was a minimal one. He'd told Loki he should be proud to have done something like this for his people, and joked that, while for Thor it hadn't been so wonderful at first, he had grown to love it here, and he would be sad, in a way, to be leaving.

For weeks, Loki had been tussling with himself.

Thor had avoided the wine on Jotunheim for so long. He had been courteous in refusing it, attentive that he didn't take even the smallest sip. Now, he was saying he would miss the realm when he left it. Loki should not have taken that as permission to do something far more underhanded than even abducting Thor had been.

But he invited Thor to dinner. One last dinner, while his raven flew back to Asgard with promise of an exchange the next day at noon. One last dinner, to celebrate their new friendship and an era in which Thor, when he became king, and eventually All-Father, could count Jotunheim as an ally again.

It didn't take much. Loki had spent years perfecting his magic, strengthening his seidr until he was capable of closing his realm to the Bifrost, and disguising himself so well in the halls of the Asgardian palace that he'd been able to steal the God of Thunder from his bed and whisk him away to this prison.

Fooling Thor's mind into seeing a goblet of wine as being filled with nothing more than water would be a party trick in comparison.

Loki looked over the dinner table, covered in red cloth, Thor's colour, for the occasion, and heaping with foods Loki knew Thor enjoyed, and twisted his fingers together. To him, the red of

the wine in Thor's goblet was richer, darker than the cloth. Bloody, damning.

But he didn't pour it out, and when the knock came on the door to his apartments, he moved away from the table swiftly, moving from the dining area, through his library, and to the heavy oak door. Swinging it open, he found Thor on the other side, smiling, unknowing.

How had Loki ever stood a chance? Thor was beautiful, and Loki had known that, but as he'd spent more time with him, he'd become even more so in Loki's eyes. His blue eyes, that first morning so stormy, were clear and kind, now, looking Loki over before he asked, in his smooth, honey-warm voice, "may I come in?"

"Of course," Loki stepped aside, gesturing into his apartments. "You are the guest of honour, after all."

Thor laughed, moving into Loki's library and undoing the clasp on the cloak at his neck. It was a deep blue, heavy, lined with fur and intended to keep the prince warm during his time here. Against it, his golden hair that he'd worn in a plait tonight shone, and Loki reached out to take it from him, hanging it next to his own by the door.

"Guest of honour, yes. You know, I've been here months, Loki, and I haven't once stepped foot in your apartments. I suppose this is a special occasion." Thor looked back at Loki, and Loki was almost stunned to find he looked sad. "Tomorrow I go back to Asgard. So, tonight," he clapped his hands, and Loki watched while he forced happiness up onto his face like a chore. Perhaps Loki's plans weren't so ill-conceived? "Tonight, we will enjoy."

"Precisely that," Loki agreed, moving closer and laying his hand on Thor's arm. "This way. I would give you the tour, but the food's been laid out, and I wouldn't want it to get cold while I attempt to impress you with what I *know* is a mere shadow of your own apartments back on Asgard."

Dinner *was* enjoyable. The food had been prepared hot, and Thor enjoyed it. He made a show of that, complimenting each dish and groaning when he had taken a particularly delicious first bite. He'd remarked how he would be telling all of Asgard of the abilities of the Jotnar chefs, and teased that Jotunheim may become a busy holiday spot for the most food-loving of the Asgardians.

It had been easy, but, all through dinner, Loki had been tense. He did what he could to keep his eyes from straying to Thor's untouched goblet, knowing that should he seem to be paying it particular attention, Thor would know what he was doing.

At the same time, while they spoke, and shared stories and enjoyed their dinner, Loki could not shake the guilt.

Thor, should he drink that wine, would be trapped in Jotunheim, in a sense. He would need to finish the goblet, for the spell Loki had cast to take full effect. Even a small sip would mean he needed to spend time in the realm, lest he be given over to terrible pain and lethargy. And Thor, Loki had noticed in their time together, was not the type to indulge in only small sips.

No matter what Thor said about his sadness at leaving Jotunheim, Loki knew he missed his home. He missed his family, his friends and his people. If Loki tricked him into drinking that wine, not only would he be making it impossible to keep the pact, but he would be making Thor miserable. He would be breaking a trust they had forged in the most untrustworthy and shaky circumstances, and the smiles that Thor was giving him now, while he helped himself to another serving, would be nothing but memories.

There would be no warmth for Loki.

It was both a relief and an annoyance that Thor wasn't drinking his wine. He had been helping himself to stews, meats, vegetables – everything but the goblet in front of him, even if there was a sweating pitcher of icy cold water sitting not far from them that would mean draining his goblet would not be the end of his drink. Thor not drinking from the goblet meant that Loki didn't need to lose his warmth just yet. It also meant that the torture of watching him be oblivious to what Loki had planned continued.

“You know, I remember you, from when I was a boy.”

Loki hummed, looking up from his own plate, where he was still working on his first servings of everything. “Do you?”

Thor nodded, smiling almost fondly. “I remember our fathers meeting. They were discussing whose child would get to rule Hel, when they came of age, did you know that? Your father was putting forth your eldest brother. Ah, his name was...”

“Byleistr.” Loki said, quietly, feeling a little on the spot. Yes, that *had* been what they were meeting over, wasn't it? Loki had been so annoyed, feeling overlooked and unimportant, and he'd chosen to focus on other things to distract himself. He'd focused on Thor.

“Yes, Byleistr, thank you.” Thor took another mouthful of food, chewed, swallowed. “In any case, I feel as though your father was beginning to think about ways to defy mine by that point. If he hadn't been, I'm sure the way my father insisted it would be Hela, my sister, would have done it. He didn't give an inch, wouldn't listen to any alternative.” A shake of his head, and Loki filed that away. Thor didn't seem all that proud of his father, now. This was not the way he'd spoken on the morning that Loki had visited him, held him aloft and stopped him from assaulting him with a vase.

“I was so... *nervous*.” Thor continued, and that had Loki laughing. He hadn't meant to, but now it was bursting out of him easily.

“Nervous?” He asked, thankful that Thor was grinning at him. “You were nervous? By the Norns, that wasn't what I remembered. You were running around, playing, acting like...” *the child you were*. Loki waved his hand to imply those words. “And I was envious. My father would have beaten me when we got home if I had done that.”

“Hah. My father *didn't* beat me, thankfully. Only because my mother stepped in, I think. But I remembered hating you for a while after that, because my father had compared me to you in his bellows when we had gotten back to the palace. He'd sat on his golden throne and damned me as an embarrassment while *Laufey's runt* had more decorum than I, and would be twice the king I would become if he'd ever had the chance.” Thor smiled, and without warning, reached across the table to lay his hand on Loki's.

“He was right, of course. I may not have been very pleased with you when I got here, and I believe that was entirely justified. But you are a king that the Jotnar can be proud of. You have defended your people and acted in their best interests, and though I should *hate* you, for taking me captive and treating me like a bargaining piece...”

Thor shook his head, again, his thumb swiping over the back of Loki's, gentle, in a way that made Loki's heart skip a beat in his chest.

Oh, but he was damned.

“I cannot hate you, Loki. I think of you as a friend, now. One who, perhaps, needs to be watched from time to time so his schemes don’t go unchecked, but a friend. I’m... rather fond, really.” He laughed, and drew his hand back, almost as though he was suddenly shy, suddenly ashamed, and Loki realized why.

Thor had been saying all this, and Loki had said nothing, too caught up in the warmth of his touch and the sincerity of his praise.

“Well, all that blathering has dried my tongue. Time to wet it so I can continue to give you memories of a prince of Asgard who happily makes an ass of himself, hm?”

If Thor drank the wine, Thor would be trapped here. Thor would be stuck on Jotunheim, and he would be miserable.

Thor, miserable, would not make Loki happy.

So, as Thor lifted his goblet, finally, after an entire evening of Loki agonizing over needing it to touch his lips, Loki shouted, ‘no!’, and reached across the table, covering the goblet with his hand. Thor startled, staring across the table at Loki, taking in the way he’d stood up so quickly his chair had fallen back, and the wild, desperate look in his eyes.

“Why not?”

There was no accusation in Thor’s tone. No distrust in his eyes.

Still, Loki felt shame.

“It isn’t water,” he answered, quietly, untucking his hand from the top of the goblet and releasing his magic. He could see, in Thor’s eyes, the realization as the clear liquid turned deep red, revealing it for what it truly was. “I’m so sorry.”

Those were words that Loki had not ever uttered to Thor, and he knew that neither of them had ever expected them to pass his lips. Loki had never apologized for taking Thor captive, for holding him from his family and friends. He had never said he was sorry for keeping the prince of Asgard trapped within the palace of Jotunheim, and then within the realm itself. Loki of Jotunheim had never made a habit of apologizing to Thor of Asgard.

But now, with his deception laid bare and his trickery revealed, he was apologizing. For an affront that was far more personal than the abduction had ever been, he was apologizing.

Thor was quiet, looking at the wine, and the tension in Loki’s belly twisted, harder. He could not hear the thunder, but he had no doubt it was coming.

Asgard may have agreed to Loki’s terms, but when Thor returned home and told his father what had happened, Loki would not be surprised if Thor was the one leading the charge to destroy them.

And it was that, that horrid fear that Thor was going to turn against Jotunheim after all his kind, warm words, that had Loki opening his mouth, and letting the truths spill, freely.

“I wanted to hate you, I truly did. And I tried for some time, but just like my people, I’ve fallen for you, Thor Odinson. I’ve fallen for you in ways I never would have anticipated, in ways that have made me...” Loki’s hand trembled, drawing attention back to the wine. “Act despicably. Because I wanted to hate you, but I think I love you.”

It was the first time he’d really said the words. The first time he had thought them and not, a

second later, told himself he was falling victim to some reverse Stockholm syndrome. It wasn't something he normally entertained, but now, with Thor seemingly refusing to look at him, he let it free.

"But I cannot do this. No matter what pain I'll feel knowing you're gone to Asgard, I cannot do something that means you will be trapped here. I cannot trap you away from all you love. That is not love."

For the first time since Loki had uncovered the goblet and shown the truth of what was within, Thor's eyes left it, and looked up at him, meeting his own. He was impossible to read, and Loki strained to hear the thunder he knew must be coming, building in the distance and racing to heed its master's anger.

"No." Thor uttered, quietly. "It isn't."

Without so much as jostling Loki, he took the goblet out from under his hand, lifted to his lips and drank.

"No. *No!*" Loki reached for it, again, stretching himself across the table, but it was too late. The damage was done, and when Thor pulled the half-empty goblet from his lips, they shone, wet and red. "No, Thor, what have you – what have I done?"

The dread was setting in, heavy, spread from Loki's gut through his entire body, making it hard for him to keep from shaking. Thor had seen Loki's ploy, and punished him for it. There would be no way around it, and Asgard's anger would break upon Jotunheim like fire over ice. They wouldn't stand a chance, and it was Loki's fault.

To his confusion, Thor was smiling, shaking his head. Standing and reaching for Loki's face with both hands. If he meant to break Loki's neck, Loki would be helpless to stop it, because he didn't move to protect himself, only frowned as Thor's warmth pressed against his blue skin. "*You* warned me. You revealed your own underhanded plot to keep me here, and insisted you couldn't do it, because you loved me, and love wouldn't be forcing me to be trapped here, on Jotunheim. Well, somewhat trapped. I did my reading, my king. You have libraries here that are, maybe, not as impressive as yours I've barely seen, but I have an inkling of the spell you used."

Loki hadn't watched Thor every moment of every day. Without his knowledge, Thor had figured him out.

"A full goblet, yes, would tie me here forever. A quarter would mean a few months." Taking a hand from Loki's face, Thor picked up the goblet, squinting critically at it. "I would say I drank about half. Six months."

Setting the goblet back on the table, Thor met Loki's eyes again. "I would not call what you had planned love, but you didn't go through with it. You are, as I've found, not as terrible as the stories say. I have seen a side of you they don't tell, and I cannot lie, Loki Laufeyson. You were not alone in your private sadness over Asgard's agreement."

Loki sucked in a breath, and Thor laughed, letting him go. Loki pushed away from the table, careful around his overturned chair, never taking his eyes off the other as he came around the table. His movements were sure, confident, and, as he rounded the corner, Loki's eyes caught on the blooms of colour and life following him. Even here, in the palace, between ancient stones.

"Since that first time, have you truly not noticed the flowers blooming in Jotunheim? Have you not seen that their numbers have done nothing but triple when I am with you, on our walks, during our

discussions?”

Loki shook his head, for the first time reaching back when Thor reached for him. His hands were warm, fingers going around Loki's without a moment's hesitation.

“I didn't look away from your face long enough to notice.”

Thor smiled. “In love with me.”

Loki nodded. “Guilty as charged.”

When Thor leaned in, it wasn't drastic. He didn't rush in, crushing Loki's lips under his. He leaned closer, down, his lips catching Loki's in a kiss that made Loki feel he was on fire. When he broke away, it was only to whisper the words, “and I with you” against Loki's lips.

Then he was pulling him in, pressing their mouths together with desperation, and Loki returned it in kind, his arms going around Thor, his kisses hungry, needy, tasting the wine and wanting so much from the one he'd once thought his enemy.

“If this is to be the final night of this visit,” Thor said, when they broke apart, lips swollen and chests heaving. “Then I would have you. I would lay you out, King Loki, and make love to you so sweetly it will carry you through until the next time I must come to Jotunheim.” When he smirked, Loki was unsure if it was because of his own eager nod, the whimper he gave, or his next words. “In a supervisory role, of course.”

“Of course,” Loki echoed. “Take me.”

Thor hadn't been given the tour, but he needn't have been. He knew the way to lead Loki, pausing for breath-stealing kisses along the way, until they were falling through the door into his bed chamber, and Thor was finding the ties and buttons to his clothing, only half-undressing him before he was herding him towards the mattress.

“We have until morning,” Loki teased, even as he pulled himself up towards the pillows, a thrill going through him at the way Thor followed, on all fours. “There's no need to rush.”

“There is, if I plan to take you so many times you cannot walk to meet my father tomorrow.” The thought of that was thrilling. Loki, sore and sated from Thor's attentions, smirking into the face of his enemy while he limped. “I want you to keep feeling me inside you until I can come back.”

“In that case,” Loki agreed, reaching for Thor's tunic, grasping it to pull him forward to fall between his own spread legs. “Do hurry.”

Never mind what he'd said, Thor did *not* hurry, and Loki would not have complained for the universe. Thor took his time, kissing him in ways that had Loki's cock twitching, rutting their hips together and making Loki groan while he worked at his clothing. Had Loki known that they could have been doing this for weeks, he may have spoken the truth sooner, but it was almost better this way. Bittersweet, knowing Thor would leave, come noon the next day, but thrilling. Promising.

And Loki was far from passive. He undressed Thor, ripping the tunic he'd worn to dinner and kissing and biting a map over his chest. He'd closed his teeth around Thor's nipple and pressed his palm to the bulge in Thor's pants, shuddering at the moan his once-captive gave at that, moaning himself when Thor grabbed him by the hair, thumb hooked around one of his horns, and pressed him back into the pillow while Thor worked his way down his body with his mouth.

Loki was aching by the time Thor finally stripped him of the last of his clothing, his leather

trousers disappearing over the edge of the bed. Thor only bare-chested, still modest, and Loki reached for his waistband, intending to divest him of that and leave bitemarks over his hips and thighs to match the ones he'd left on his chest.

Instead, Thor turned him over and lifted his hips, so Loki's face was pressed into the pillows, something he could muffle his cry into when Thor's tongue dragged over his hole.

"Ah! Thor! Oh--" Loki turned his face into the pillow he was gripping with both hands, biting the fabric and swallowing his thready moans as Thor continued, pressing the edge of his thumb into Loki's entrance, and joining it with his hot tongue.

When Loki had imagined how this evening would go, he had known there was a chance of devastation. He hadn't known it would be his own, panting, clawing at the sheets, while his purple cock twitched and leaked pre against his bed, and Thor drove him mad with his fingers and mouth, beard scratching his skin deliciously, opening him up in ways Loki had never dared hope.

Finally, Loki begged. "Please, Thor, please, my love -" He panted, reaching back and pushing at whatever part of Thor he could find. Thor relented, drawing back and letting go of Loki's hips, and when Loki looked back, he bit his lip, his cock twitching. Thor's lips were shiny, his chin wet from his own attentions, and his blue eyes were stormy, again, but not the way they'd been that first day. The darkness in them, now, was anything but defiance.

It was lust. Unleashed *want*, and Loki quaked under the force of it.

"Please." Loki turned over, sitting so he could reach for the ties at Thor's waist. Thor didn't stop him, looking down and petting a hand through his hair while he undid them. While he pushed the waist down, over Thor's hips, finally, *finally* freeing his cock.

It was nearly as purple as Loki's, the head wet, leaking in anticipation of what was to come, in appreciation of the way Loki had been moaning so prettily while Thor had eaten his ass. It was too much for Loki to ignore, with his eyes on Thor's face, and Thor's fingers still petting through his mussed hair, he leaned forward, pressing his lips to the head in a kiss.

Thor hissed, quiet, his fingers stilling.

"Loki..."

Loki smiled, and curled his fingers around the base of Thor's cock, dragging his tongue over the head, tasting him. Thor was salt and electricity, and Loki moaned, not heeding the way Thor's fingers tightened in his hair before he wrapped his lips around the head and sucked.

"Loki!"

Thor pulled on his hair, pulling him off, and Loki fell back on the pillows, laughing, reaching for a Thor who was already leaning over him, already pushing his knees up.

"Fuck me. Make me scream for you, Prince of Asgard, and I promise I will beg for more."

There was something intoxicating about seeing his words register in Thor's eyes. The way the storm in them grew impossibly stronger, and he laughed, even while Thor pushed inside him. It didn't last, of course. Not with the way Thor's cock stretched him, the bliss and pain of it mingling to turn his laugh into a groan, his fingernails digging into the warm flesh around Thor's shoulders.

"Are you afraid to break me?" He asked, knowing he was breathless, but needing to prod at the way Thor was moving into him slow. When he didn't get an answer, Loki opened his eyes,

searching out Thor's, and bit down hard on his lip at the sight.

Thor, his prisoner, his ally, his *lover*, looked like he was experiencing sweetness for the first time and needed to savour it, or else the memory would leave him when this was all over. The way he was watching Loki spoke of memorization, from the way Loki was responding to the way he felt around Thor's cock, and that was almost too much for Loki.

No matter if he was *King* of Jotunheim, he had never been made much to feel like anything special.

The way Thor breathed his name when he slid home inside him, fully seated, stretching Loki beautifully, made Loki feel special.

And it was that which made him tighten his legs around Thor's waist, the heel of his foot digging into Thor's back, pressing him impossibly closer, his own sensitive, leaking cock trapped between them. It was that which made Loki kiss Thor, deep and slow, only pulling back to murmur against his lips, "I'm ready."

It was a lie.

Loki was prone to them, when it came to Asgardians, but in this, he'd lied to himself, too. Thor moved, pulling out only to plunge back in, quick and hard, a shallow thrust, and Loki choked on his whimper, nodding, encouraging Thor to do it again. And he did. And again, and again, until Loki *knew* that he hadn't been ready for this. Had not been ready for how *good* it felt to have Thor above him, surrounding him, *inside* him. He hadn't been ready for the way Thor's cock hit that electric spot within him on every third thrust like clockwork, or the way Thor growled, pressing his forehead to Loki's shoulder and pulling his thighs higher so he could push deeper.

He hadn't been ready for the absolutely wrecked sounds that Thor pulled from him, while his bed creaked under them from the force of their fucking. Loki had never known pleasure like this, and he knew he never would.

It didn't take long for him to get to the point of begging. Before long he was gripping Thor, biting down on his shoulder to muffle his scream when he came, hot spurts of white painting his stomach, Thor's chest, slicking the space between them. And Thor didn't slow, didn't relent, pumping in and out of Loki, his arms trembling from release. Loki was greedy for.

"Yes, my love, my darling," Loki gasped, against Thor's ear, pushing back his loose, sweaty hairs with a shaky hand. "Fill me, please, I need--"

What Loki needed was what he felt, his words lost in a gasp of bliss, Thor's cry echoing around the room, his spend hot inside Loki, filling him up so he knew he would be leaking. The bedsheets would be stained after this, and the servants may have questions they would never ask, and Loki didn't *care*.

What he cared about was Thor, breathing hard, collapsed against him with no pointless worry about how his bulk would press heavy on Loki.

All his life, Loki had harboured a private resentment for being a runt. For being smaller than his brothers, his father, most of his people. For having the Jotnar children stand at his shoulder when they were hardly into adolescence, and having his own mother stand over him. Even Thor had been taller than him, and Loki had known, at the time, he resented that, too.

Now, with Thor laying over him, peppering lazy, open kisses over his neck, Loki was glad for it.

If he hadn't been a runt, maybe this would have been more difficult. Thor wouldn't have reached

all the parts of him that he did. Loki wouldn't have been able to kiss him, moaning into his smiling mouth while Thor teased with pulling out of his body.

They dozed, after that. Both of them messy, and exhausted, full from their dinner and warm from each other, and their wine. Loki woke still slick from Thor's release, and after only a few kisses, he was thankful, again, that he'd been born a runt, while he rocked down on Thor's cock, riding him hard without a concern that his bulk could break the other's pelvis.

Maybe the Norns had planned for this all along, he thought, later, while Thor slept with his head pillowed on Loki's chest after his third release – this time down Loki's willing throat.

Perhaps it had always been written in the stars that Laufey would be imprisoned, that it would drive his heir to a coup, and that the coup would result not only in Jotunheim regaining her freedom, but in a new alliance between Asgard, because Jotunheim's runt king and the God of Thunder had fallen in love in the most unlikely of circumstances.

Where they should have grown to hate each other, they had turned to love, and it was love that was their expression, the next morning, when they had bathed and redressed, covering marks on necks and tidying hair that had fallen out of a plait early in the second round.

They needn't have bothered trying to hide what they'd done.

"They haven't died yet," Farbauti remarked, as they stood outside the palace. Looking back, Loki smiled at the sight. All around the tower where the king's apartments stood, flowers had bloomed, full and lush. They were brightly coloured, waving in the cold wind of Jotunheim, and had been a testament to what he and Thor had done the night before for hours. "I'm not sure what your father will say."

Loki smiled, "my father doesn't need to say anything. They won't be his apartments."

Farbauti raised her eyebrows, looking over his way in interest. "No? But I thought you hated the crown? Not so heavy on your head anymore?"

Her words were almost innocent, her tone almost simply curious, but Loki knew his mother better, and could see the truth of it in her eyes. She knew what had come to pass. She understood. And somehow, she wasn't passing harsh judgment.

"There are benefits that I had previously let go without a thought," Loki answered. He didn't need to look at Thor, on his other side, to know the prince was smirking.

Thor hadn't done much to dissuade the truth from being known, this morning, when they had made their way down for one final breakfast. He'd admitted to drinking the wine, and said he thought it was for the best. That he would relish in having an unbreakable reason to visit Jotunheim for half the year, because Jotunheim was their greatest ally.

It would be difficult, yes, and when Thor became king, things would need to be arranged.

But they could manage it. Loki was sure of that.

What they had managed in what was already a difficult situation, he had faith in their abilities.

It wasn't long after that the light of the Bifrost had come crashing down on Jotunheim. The guards and the people who had gathered around did not flinch, and of that, Loki was proud. They had grown to trust the Asgardian prince. They knew he would not let any harm come to them.

Asgard was an ally once more, an enemy no longer.

When the light cleared, Odin stood tall in his armour, rigid and proud. It was unsurprising. As unsurprising as the queen at his side who rushed forward to embrace her son, holding him tightly and murmuring into his ear.

For a moment, Loki felt a stab of guilt at that. Frigga had been the one to truly agree to this peace. She had missed her son deeply, and Loki had been the one to put that strain on her.

All was fair in love and war, however, and they had made their peace. He did not see hatred or judgment in the queen's eyes when she pulled back from her son, and nodded to him.

What he did see, though, was amusement in them when her gaze landed on a particular corner of the palace behind Loki. In Odin's one good eye, Loki saw something he would call akin to dread, and he relished it.

"King Loki of Jotunheim," Odin said, finally, when Loki walked forward, having let the Asgardian royal family have their reunion. "Your terms have been met. In return for my son, I have agreed to allow Jotunheim back its freedoms."

Loki nodded, solemn but unyielding in tone when he spoke. "And the other?"

He could have sworn Odin sighed, but there was hardly a second to consider it before the Bifrost was coming down on them, again. When it shrank back this time, against all odds Loki was *glad* to see the figure standing there. Perhaps not because of who he was, but because he represented Loki's success.

Laufey had aged, during his time in Hel, and Loki had no doubt the tortures he had endured had left marks on him that were both physical and mental. There would be time to examine that at length later, however. Laufey and Loki both understood, with Odin looking on, there was naught else to do but nod to each other.

Laufey, moving forward to join his family on the cold, icy ground of his home realm, did take a moment to add, quietly, "thank you, my son."

It was an acknowledgement that Loki would let sink in later. The Asgardians were still here, and even if Thor had known him at his most vulnerable, it was not something Loki dared give Odin a glimpse of.

"There's one more thing," Thor interjected, moving to stand between his father and Loki. "I made a choice last night, father."

Loki was sure Odin's gaze fell on the tower. "So I've seen."

His tone spoke of a discussion to be had later and, remembering what Thor had shared about that day when they were children, Loki hoped the old man wouldn't have the gall to try and punish him.

"I have spent my time with the people of Jotunheim. I have come to know their stories, their home,

and their customs. I have come to know *them*, having played with their children and helped in their work. It was a mistake to ever punish these people for the insanity of their former king.”

At Loki’s side, Laufey bowed his head. Anger? Or shame? Loki wasn’t sure.

Odin, for his part, didn’t speak, and Thor pressed forward.

“I am to become All-Father some day, and that means that I will take over the legacy you have created. The alliances and control of the Nine Realms will fall to me, and I will not take it with Jotunheim under my heel. From this day forth, I will act as a special ambassador to Jotunheim. For half the year, each year.”

There was a murmur among the crowd, and a glance showed Loki it was accompanied by smiles. Hopeful smiles.

Jotunheim’s fate was turning around.

“Perhaps, in time, we can create an alliance of our realms that will span centuries, but, for now, reparations need to be made, and trust needs to be rebuilt. I will be the one to do that.” Thor turned to look at the crowd that had gathered. The men and women of Jotunheim, and its children. All souls he had come to know, souls who now knew him in return. “If you’ll have me.”

“Aye, boy, of course!” A man called out. “The *Son* of Odin is welcome in Jotunheim!”

A cheer rang out over the crowd, and while Odin stayed stoic, Frigga smiled, open and warm, a reflection of the smile on her son’s face while he nodded, clearly touched by their acceptance.

“And your king? What does he say to my proposition?”

Loki felt frozen for a second, the weight of so many eyes on him. He forgot them in an instant, though, seeing the smile on Thor’s face. The look in his eyes that had been there last night, the final time they made love, slow and careful, watching each other’s faces as they’d come undone.

Perhaps it was too much. Perhaps it was too drastic a response.

But Loki, as he’d shown through this coup, had always enjoyed the dramatic.

The snow crunching under his boots, he strode across the square, a smile growing bright and genuine on his face when Thor moved forward to meet him.

With not a moment’s hesitation, Loki took Thor’s face in his hands, the other’s cheeks rosy red against the blue of his own palms, and he kissed him.

“I say it’s a fine proposition.”

The cheers erupted again, after a second. Perhaps it was shock. Loki wasn’t sure, and he didn’t care. He simply knew that he had succeeded, and, in the end, it had paid off for him, as well.

Thor had changed Loki’s outlook. On himself, on the way he could lead his realm, and on what the future held. Together, they would build a future for both of their realms that would benefit all, and solidify the unity of the Nine Realms in a way that hadn’t been seen since before Laufey’s betrayal.

As Loki watched the Bifrost come down, free to reach Jotunheim now with his barrier magic released, he couldn’t help but smile at the words Queen Frigga had said before they’d gone.

“Perhaps, all along, this love was our way to peace.”

If Thor and Loki had their way, it would be.

End Notes

Thank you so much for reading!

I really enjoyed writing this piece. It came easily and I'm really quite proud of it. It was something different, and fun, and if you enjoyed it, or wanted to leave a comment, I would be *eternally* grateful!

Thank you again for reading!

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!